A Watershed Conditions Report For the State of Kansas HUC 10270207 (Lower Little Blue) Watershed

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Watershed Conditions Report
For
HUC 8 10270207 (Lower Little Blue)

Prepared by
Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)
Nonpoint Source Section
01/02/01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Watershed Conditions Report is designed to serve as a water quality "atlas", and is intended to provide stakeholders in water quality with a tool to assess the condition of water resources within their watershed. Surface water quality for HUC 8 10270207 streams and rivers is generally poor with many of the surface water bodies not supporting their designated uses. The primary pollutant concern within HUC 8 10270207 streams and rivers is fecal coliform bacteria (FCB). FCB is found in the digestive systems of warm blooded animals. In the environmental coliform bacteria is an indicator of potential disease producing organisms.

The second largest reservoir in the state, Tuttle Creek Lake, is located within this watershed, along with several small city and county lakes, and one wetland area. The primary pollutant concerns for lakes and wetlands within the watershed is eutrophication, dissolved oxygen, excess biomass, and silt loading. Eutrophication is a natural process which creates favorable conditions for accelerated plant and algae growth and sometimes creating excess biomass. This process is typically accelerated with nutrient loading. As plants and algae wither, decomposers recycle the nutrients using up oxygen and creating dissolved oxygen impairments within the lake.

Groundwater resources in HUC 8 10270207 include the alluvial aquifers and portions of the Glacial Drift and Dakota aquifers. Water from these aquifers is generally in good condition, but very hard, with naturally occurring minerals and nitrate as the primary pollutant concerns.

PURPOSE

The Watershed Conditions Report is designed to serve as a water quality "atlas" for a given watershed, and is intended to provide Watershed Stakeholders Committees (WSC) with a tool to assess the condition of water resources within their watershed.

BACKGROUND

The Clean Water Act mandates that States assess the quality of their waters and implement Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for water bodies that do not meet their designated uses. The following is a summary of steps taken by the State of Kansas to comply with these requirements of the Clean Water Act.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) prepared the Kansas Unified Watershed Assessment in 1998. This assessment classifies the State's watersheds into four categories. A Category I classification means the watershed is in need of restoration due to having water quality impairments or degradation of other natural resources related to an aquatic habitat, ecosystem health and other factors related to aquatic life resources. Category II watersheds are in need of protection. Category III are watersheds with pristine or sensitive aquatic system conditions on lands administered by federal, state, or tribal governments. Category IV watersheds are those for which there is insufficient data to make accurate classification. KDHE has assigned a restoration priority score to each Category I watershed.

As mandated by section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, lakes and streams within the Category I watersheds, which do not meet water quality standards, are published biannually in the 303(d) list. Subsequently, lakes and streams which appear on the 303 (d) list are scheduled to have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) prepared. KDHE is currently preparing TMDLs for impaired stream segments located within the highest restoration priority watersheds.

To restore water quality within the Category I watersheds, KDHE recommends the implementation of a Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS). The ultimate goal of the WRAPS process is to create and implement a plan to restore the health of water bodies that do not meet their water quality standards. Additionally, the WRAPS process will insure that water bodies that currently meet their water quality standards are protected.

KDHE recommends that the WRAPS process be implemented on a local level by a Watershed Stakeholders Committee (WSC). The WSC would have the responsibility of working with local and state agencies to develop a WRAPS plan. This plan should identify the following: public outreach methods; required monitoring activities based on water quality goals and outcomes; specific water quality problems; watershed coordinator/evaluator; actions to be taken to achieve water quality goals and outcomes; schedule for implementation of needed restoration measures; and funding needs.

Streams and Rivers

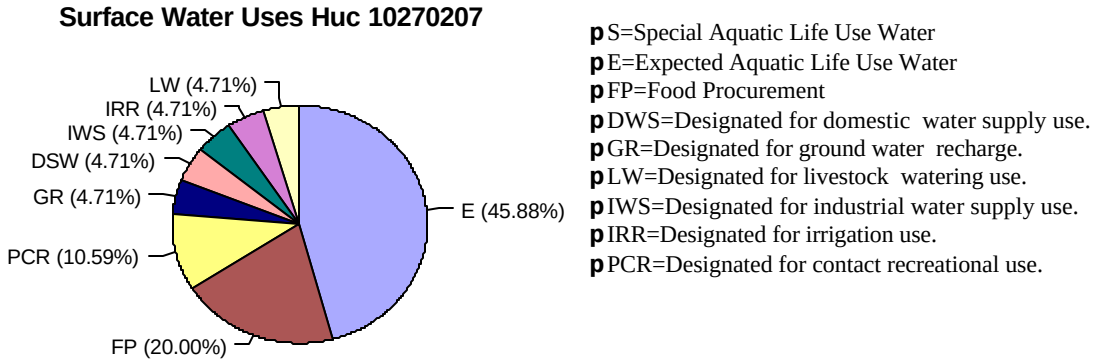
HUC 8 10270207

The Huc 8 10270207 watershed is ranked tenth in priority for watershed restoration throughout the state. According to the Unified Watershed Assessment, 79% of the total stream miles in this watershed do not meet their designated uses. The Little Blue River, Cook Creek, Mill Creek, and Camp Creek are among the larger Rivers and Creeks. See Attachment 1 for a map of streams and rivers in HUC 8 10270207.

Designated Uses

This watershed is mostly a drainage basin for the Little Blue River, however, several smaller streams, creeks, and rivers are also abundant throughout the area. There are 44 public water supplies within the watershed, many of which draw water from the Little Blue River, it's alluvium and Tuttle Creek Lake. According to the Kansas Surface Water Register, the most common designated uses for streams and rivers in this watershed include: aquatic life uses, food procurement, and contact recreation.

Figure 1



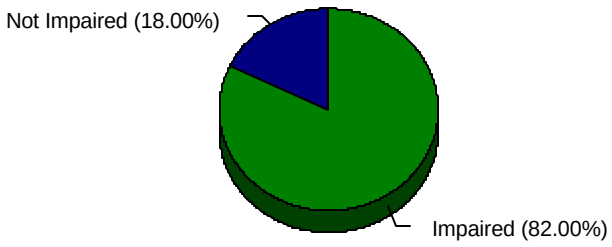
TMDL/Contaminate Concerns

Streams and rivers throughout Kansas have been sub-divided into segments. By dividing the streams and rivers into segments they can be better analyzed and understood. A reach of river or stream may have segments which vary greatly in water quality, based on surrounding land uses. The figures below display the impairments of the streams and rivers based on the number of segments sampled.

Surface waters not meeting their designated uses will require total maximum daily loads (TMDLs). Figure 2 shows 82% of the stream/river segments sampled in this watershed need TMDLs. As shown below the primary pollutant concern of this watersheds' streams and rivers are fecal coliform bacteria (FCB). Approximately 100% of the stream and river segments not meeting their designated uses are impaired by FCB. FCB is a bacteria present in human and animal waste. It serves as an indicator of potential disease causing organisms.

Figure 2

Percentage of Stream/River Segments Needing TMDLs



Potential Pollution Sources

Potential sources of FCB contamination include feedlots, wastewater treatment facilities, septic systems, and wildlife.

Analyzing the land uses within this watershed helps to understand which land uses might have greater influences on the source of the impairments. Below are a list of the land uses in this watershed. Grassland is considered grazingland for livestock.

- Wooded area....5%
- Row Crop....32%
- Grassland....63%

Feedlots: In Kansas, confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) with greater than 300 animal units must register with KDHE. There are approximately 106 registered CAFOs located within HUC8 10270207 (this number, which is based on best available information, may be dated and subject to change). Waste disposal practices and waste water effluent quality are closely monitored by KDHE for these registered CAFOs to determine the need for runoff control practices or structure. Because of this monitoring, registered CAFOs are not considered a significant threat to water resources within the watershed. A portion of the State's livestock population exists on small unregistered farms. These small unregistered livestock operations may contribute a significant source of fecal coliform bacteria and nutrients, depending on the presence and condition of waste management systems and proximity to water resources.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities: There are approximately 13 municipal and industrial wastewater treatment facilities within the watershed (this number may be dated and subject to change). These facilities are currently regulated by KDHE under National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. These permits specify the maximum amount of pollutants allowed to be discharged to the "waters of the State". Due to the chlorination processes involved in municipal waste treatment, these facilities are not considered to be a significant source of fecal coliform bacteria; however they may be a significant source of nutrients.

Septic Systems: There are currently thousands of septic systems within the watershed and this number is increasing. When properly designed, installed, and maintained, septic systems can act as an effective means of wastewater treatment. However, poorly maintained or "failing" septic systems can leach pollutants into nearby surface waters and groundwater. The exact number of failing septic systems within the watershed is unknown; however the number may be increasing due to the current trends in suburban development. Local Environmental Protection Programs and County health departments may provide excellent sources of information regarding the proper design, installation, and maintenance for septic systems.

Wildlife: Wildlife located throughout the watershed are not usually considered a significant source of nonpoint source pollutants. However, during seasonal migrations, concentrations of waterfowl can add significant amounts of fecal coliform bacteria and nutrients into surface water resources.

Row Crop Agriculture: As stated above, approximately 32% of the watershed's land is used for row crop agriculture. Row crop agriculture can be a significant source of nonpoint source pollution. Common pollutants from row crop agriculture include sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and fecal coliform bacteria. Many producers within the watershed regularly implement and maintain BMPs to limit the amount of nonpoint source pollutants leaving their farm. Some common BMPs include: the use of contour plowing; use of cover crops; maintaining buffer strips along field edges; and proper timing of fertilizer application.

Lakes & Wetlands

Huc 8 10270207 is the home to the second largest lake in the state, Tuttle Creek Lake, several smaller city and county lakes, as well as one wetland area. Tuttle Creek Lake is used for recreational purposes as well as a public water supply source for many local communities. See Attachment 2 for a map of lakes in HUC 8 10270207.

Designated Uses

According to the Surface Water Register, the majority of the lakes and wetlands in this watershed are designated for expected aquatic life use and food procurement.

TMDL/Contaminate Concerns

Surface waters not meeting their designated uses will require total maximum daily loads (TMDL)s. Approximately 100% (or two lakes) of this watershed's lakes/wetlands sampled need TMDLs.

The primary pollutants for this watershed's lakes and wetlands are eutrophication, dissolved oxygen levels (DO), excess biomass (AP), and silt. Of the two lakes, one is impaired by eutrophication and silt loading, and the other is impaired by excess biomass and low dissolved oxygen levels. Eutrophication is caused by excess nutrients from a variety of nitrogen and phosphorous sources including row crop agriculture,

feedlots, septic systems, and urban/suburban runoff. Low DO levels typically coincide with an abundance of algae, which cause the population of decomposers to increase which in turn use up the oxygen in the stream or river. Excessive biomass is an abundance of vascular plants that tend to be a nuisance and interfere with designated water uses. Silt loading is a result of erosion as the bare soil enters the lake and settles to the bottom. Silt decreases water clarity and eventually decreases water storage capacity. Silt also carries phosphorous into the reservoir, which can accelerate eutrophication.

Potential Pollution Sources

Based on the watershed's land use percentages, the primary pollutant sources for nutrients would be row crop agriculture, feedlots, and rural septic systems. Additionally, municipal waste water treatment plants may contribute significant amounts of nutrients into the watershed.

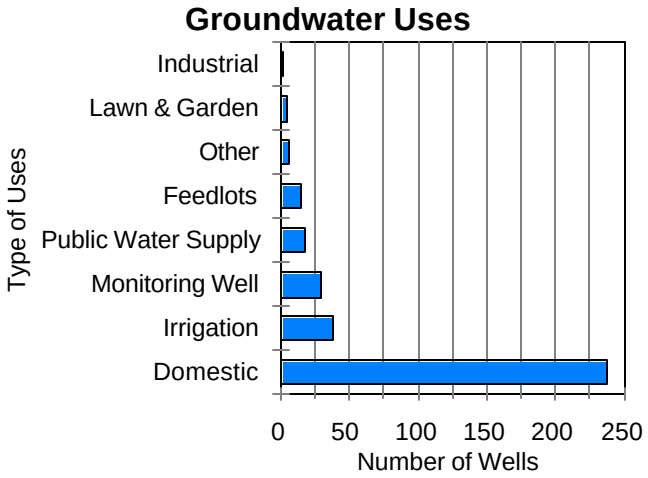
Groundwater

Major groundwater aquifers underlying this watershed include portions of the Glacial Drift and Dakota aquifers and alluvial aquifers of the Little Blue River and its tributaries. See attachment 4 for a map of groundwater aquifers within this watershed.

Designated Uses

There are approximately 348 groundwater wells located within the watershed. Water from these wells is used for domestic use, irrigation, groundwater monitoring and public water supply.

Figure 4



Aquifer Characteristics

Glacial Drift Aquifer: Portions of the Glacial Drift aquifer exist in few eastern portions of the watershed. Water from this aquifer is often used for rural domestic water supply. Historically, water from this aquifer is very hard with nitrates being one of the primary pollutant concerns.

Dakota Aquifer: Portions of the Dakota aquifer exist in the western half of the watershed. Water from this aquifer is used for irrigation, public use, and rural-domestic water supply. Water from this aquifer is good; however chloride and sodium content increase with depth.

Alluvial Aquifer: Alluvial aquifers of the Little Blue River and its tributaries exist throughout the watershed. Alluvial aquifers provide the primary water source for many public water supplies located within the watershed. Water quality in alluvial aquifers is generally good; however nitrates, minerals, pesticides, salts, and bacteria can be pollutant concerns.

Potential Pollution Types and Sources

Common groundwater pollutants include: nitrates, chloride, sulfates, bacteria and atrazine. Nitrate impaired groundwater is perhaps the most prevalent groundwater contamination problem in the State.

Nitrate: Nitrate is a naturally occurring compound and is an essential component of all living matter. However, high concentrations of nitrate in drinking water can cause adverse health effects including "blue baby" syndrome. Sources of nitrate include municipal waste water treatment plant discharges, runoff from livestock operations, leaching of fertilizer from urban and agricultural areas, and failing septic systems.

Chloride: Chloride is a naturally occurring mineral found in Kansas lakes, streams, and groundwater. In high concentrations, chloride can cause deterioration of domestic plumbing, water heaters, and municipal water works. The primary source of chloride impacted groundwater is intrusion of salt water from deeper formations, often due to improperly constructed water wells which allow confined aquifers to come into contact with each other.

Sulfates: Sulfate is a naturally occurring mineral that can cause taste and odor problems in drinking water. Sulfates are dissolved into groundwater as the water moves through various sulfur containing rock formations.

Bacteria: Fecal coliform bacteria are found in the digestive systems of warm blooded animals. In the environment coliform bacteria is an indicator of potential disease causing organisms. Potential sources of bacteria contamination in groundwater include livestock facilities, septic systems, pets, and wildlife. Many wells are impacted by bacteria due to improper construction which allows water from the surface to funnel directly into the well.

Ammonia: Ammonia is a chemical which is toxic to fish and aquatic organisms. Sources of ammonia are livestock, septic tanks, fertilizer, municipal and industrial waste.

TSS: TSS stands for Total Suspended Solids which are particles such as soil, algae, and finely divided plant material suspended in water. Sources of TSS are soil erosion from cropland, stream banks, or construction sites, and municipal and industrial waste.

VOCs: Volatile Organic Compounds, also called purgeable organics, are components of fuels and solvents. They are ingredients in many household and industrial products. Sources of VOCs are leaking fuel storage tanks, trash dumps, and some agricultural pesticides.

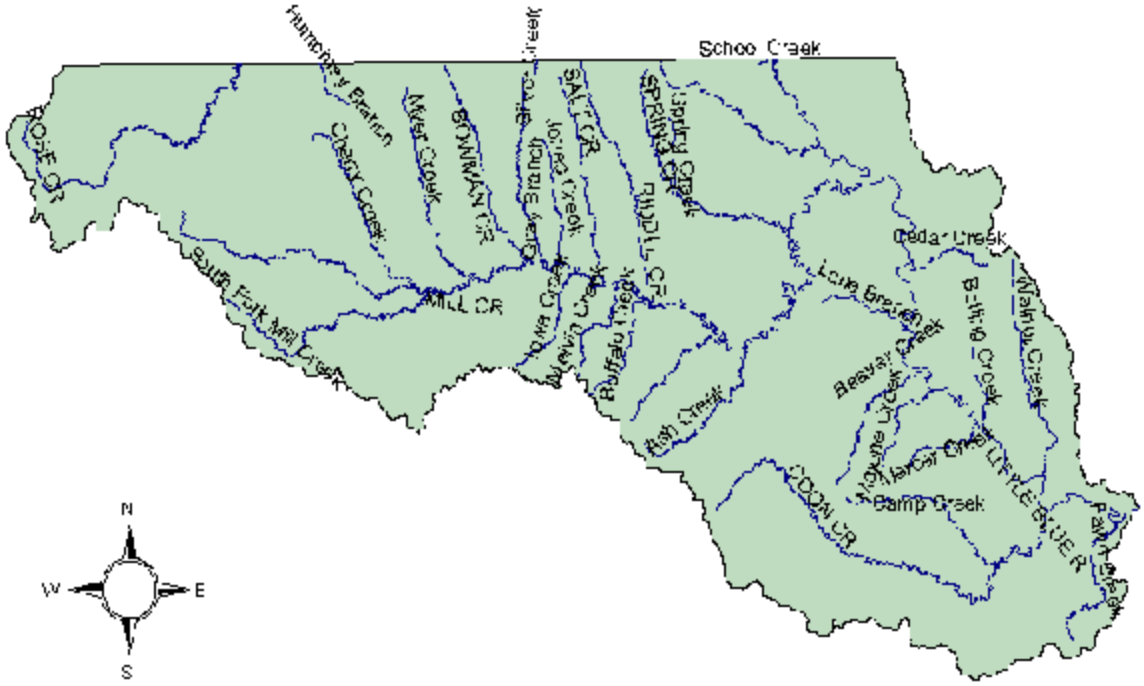
Iron: Iron is a naturally occurring element found in the soil throughout Kansas. It is an annoyance as it has an objectionable taste, causes a red stain to porcelain fixtures and laundry, and causes plumbing irritations.

Manganese: Manganese is a naturally occurring element and causes an unpleasant taste in drinking water, stains porcelain and laundry, and collects deposits in plumbing. It is naturally occurring throughout the soils in the state.

Attachment 1

Maps

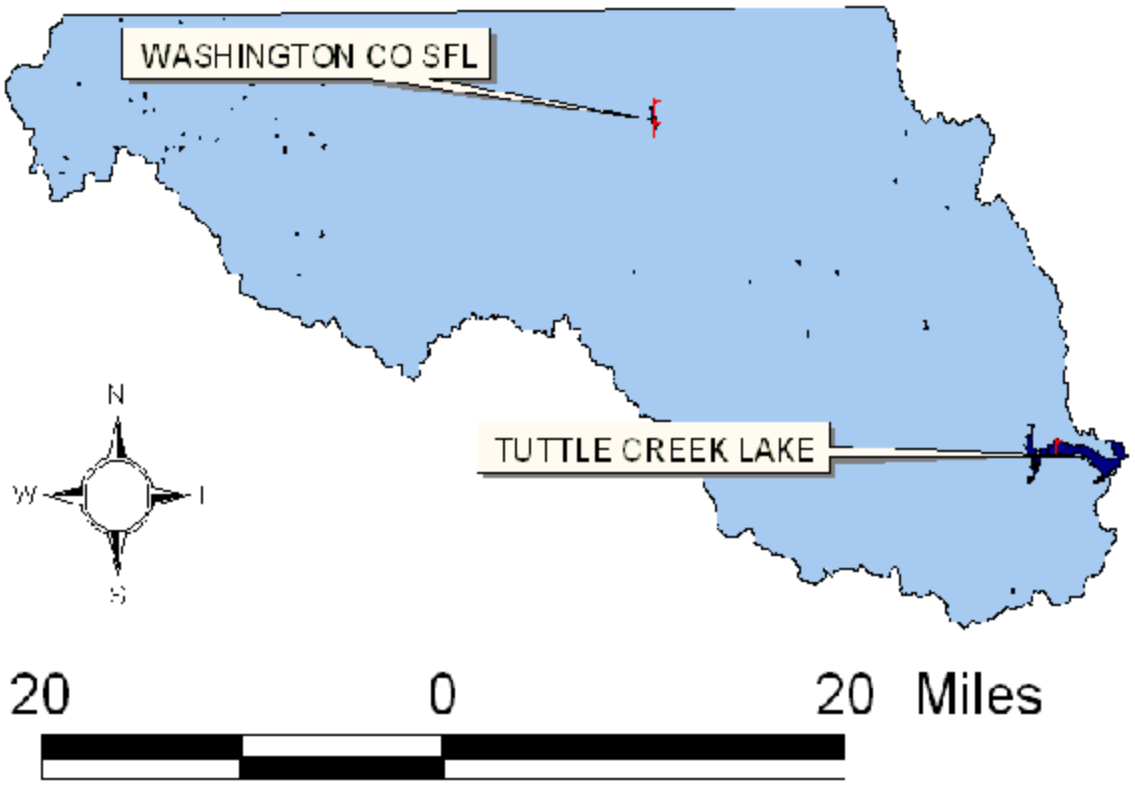
Huc -10270207- Lower Little Blue Streams & Rivers



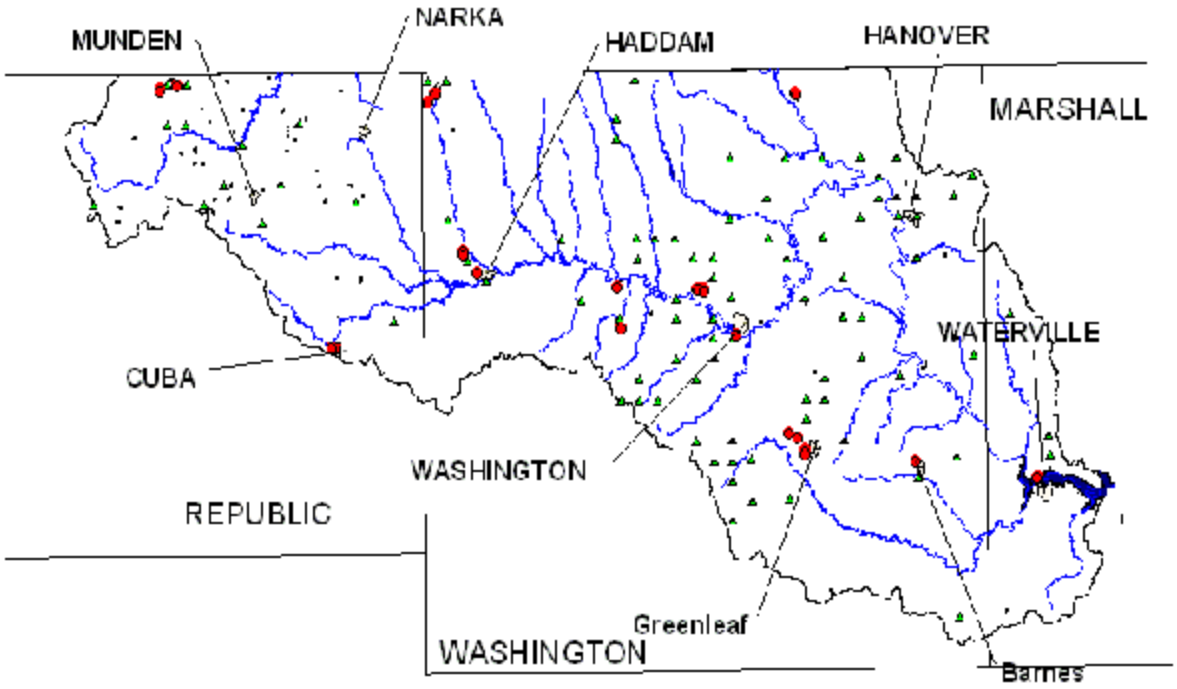
20 0 20 Miles

Streams & Rivers
Huc 10270207

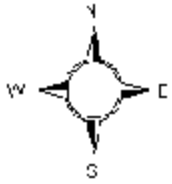
Huc -10270207- Lower Little Blue Lake Monitoring Sites



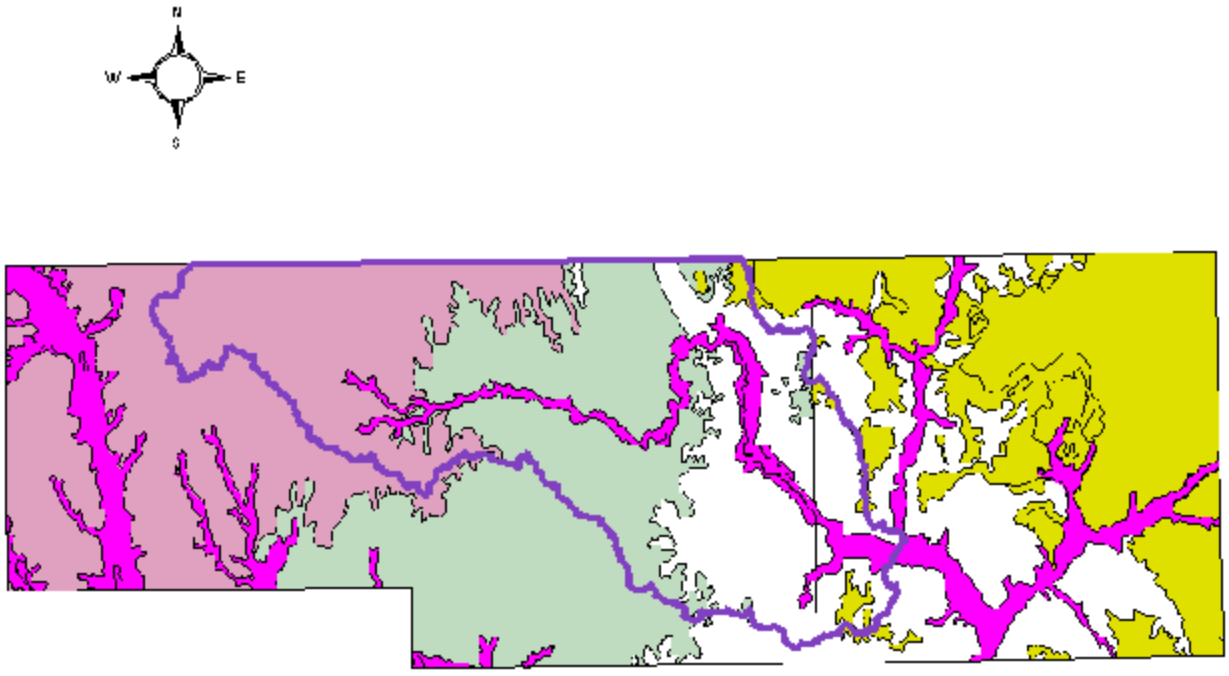
Huc -10270207- Lower Little Blue Watershed Boundary



- Public Water Supplies
- Feedlots
- Cities
- Streams & Rivers
- Lakes
- Huc 10270207
- County Boundary



Huc 10270207 Lower Little Blue Groundwater Aquifers



20 0 20 40 Miles

- Watershed Boundary
- Alluvial Aquifer
- Glacial Aquifer
- Dakota Unconfined Aquifer
- Dakota Confined Aquifer
- County Boundary

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Bureau of Water
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